

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM AR HUMAN RIGHTS
SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS; AMBASSADOR'S TRIP TO NORTHERN ARGENTINA

1. SUMMARY: EXIM'S BANK REJECTION OF FUNDING FOR DAM PROJECT IN ARGENTINA PRECIPITATED A COOL AND UNCEREMONIOUS TRIP FOR AMBASSADOR AND HIS ENTOURAGE ON HIS RECENT TOUR TO NORTHERN ARGENTINA. THE TRADITIONAL FESTIVE SPIRIT, WHICH INCLUDES REVIEWING TROOPS, FLOWERS, VIP'S SPEECHES, MEDIA INTERVIEWS ETC., WAS NOTICEABLY LACKING ON AMBASSADOR'S ARRIVAL AT THE VARIOUS AIRPORTS. IMMEDIATELY ON ARRIVAL, THE THEME OF THE DAY WAS EXIM BANK, THUS PLACING ALL INTERVIEWS WITH KEY OFFICIALS ON A COOL(NOT TOO FRIENDLY) BASIS.

2. ON JULY 25 SALTA WAS THE FIRST CITY TO BE VISITED. THE AIRPORT WAS DEVOID OF THE WELCOMING DIGNITARIES. HAVING ARRIVED AT 1300 HRS. LUNCH BECAME THE FIRST ORDER OF THE DAY. WE THEN PROCEEDED TO CALL ON GOVERNOR ULLOA, AN ENGLISH-SPEAKING RETIRED NAVY CAPTAIN, WHO HAD TRAINED IN NEWPORT, R. I. HE WAS PROPER BUT YET ALOOF AND COOL. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE OTHER EMBASSY STAFF TRAVELLING WITH ME, INCLUDING AAIR/A, AND ALUSNA, MY WIFE AND I WERE THE ONLY ONES INVITED TO A DINNER HOSTED THAT EVENING BY GOVERNOR ULLOA.

3. WE NEXT CALLED ON COL. MARIO SANCHEZ, GARRISON COMMANDER,
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WHO ALSO PROFESSED HAVING TRAINED IN THE UNITED STATES. FORMAT WAS SIMILAR INASMUCH SAME COOLNESS PREVAILED. HE INFORMED ME HE WOULD BE SEEING ME AT THE GOVERNOR'S DINNER. WE THEN PUT OUR ACT TOGETHER FOR THE MAYOR, ARCHBISHOP AND PRESIDENT OF THE SUPREME COURT. I WANTED TO LEAVE AN AWARENESS OF THE NEED TO RESORT MORE TO THE RULE OF LAW RATHER THAN GOVERNMENT BY MILITARY FIAT. I INJECTED COMMENTS ON

"HABEAUS CORPUS" AND "LEY DE AMPARO" PROCEEDINGS AS BAIT. THEY DIDN'T RISE TO THE OCCASION. THEY WERE INTERESTED IN MY PHILOSOPHIZING ABOUT AMERICAN LEGAL CONCEPTS RATHER THAN DISCUSSING ENHANCING THE ARGENTINA JUDICIAL SYSTEM - - A SUBJECT-THEY PREFERRED TO AVOID.

4. THE DINNER SESSION WITH THE GOVERNOR OF SALTA AND THE ARGENTINE MILITARY COMMANDER, WITH RESPECTIVE WIVES, WAS AS ANTICIPATED. THE SESSION SOON DEVELOPED INTO A VITRIOLIC DISTRIBE ON HOW BADLY USG FARES WITH LATIN AMERICA. TO MY SURPRISE, THE WIVES JOINED THE CHORUS IN ECHOING THE WORN OUT TUNE OF "AMERICANS DON'T UNDERSTAND US". WHATEVER EXPLANATIONS I HAVE FELL ON DEAF EARS.

5. SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO WAS NEXT ON OUR VISIT. WE ARRIVED THERE ON WEDNESDAY (JULY 26). THIS TIME THE MAYOR AND SOMEONE FROM THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE WERE ON THE SCENE AT THE AIRPORT. THEY DID EXUDE SOME WARMTH AS THEY SMILED. WE IMMEDIATELY PROCEEDED TO VISIT THE GOVERNOR. HE WAS A RETIRED BRIGADIER GENERAL AND WAS ALL BUSINESS. HE MADE AN EXCELLENT PRESENTATION WITH SLIDES ABOUT VARIOUS PROJECTS BEING UNDERTAKEN BY HIS ADMINISTRATION. HE MAKE IT CLEAR PLANNING WAS VITAL TO THE AREA. HE SPOKE ABOUT LONG-RANGE PROJECTS, SUCH AS MINING, CEMENT PLANTS, FOREST ORIENTED INDUSTRIES AND RECYCLING OF OLD RAILROAD RAILS. THE GOVERNOR SEEMED TO BE A MAN OF VISION AND AVOIDED POLITICAL DISCUSSIONS. CONFIDENTIAL

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6. AFTER THE GOVERNOR WE CALLED ON THE MAYOR OF SANTIAGO DEL ESTERO. HE WAS A RETIRED ARMY COLONEL WITH A PLEASANT PERSONALITY. HIS CLAIM TO FAME WAS THAT HE WAS AN EXPERT TANGO DANCER. IT SEEMS THAT THE GOOD MAYOR SPENT MOST OF HIS TIME IN BUENOS AIRES BECAUSE OF HIS WIFE'S LACK OF ACCLIMATION TO THE AREA. I THEN PROCEEDED TO CALL ON THE MILITARY COMMANDER, WHO LINED UP THE TROOPS FOR MY INSPECTION. HE THEN OFFERED A RECEPTION IN THE OFFICER'S CLUB IN MY HONOR. HE WAS FRIENDLY AND SPOKE WELL OF THE STATES, WHICH MADE MY HEART RYTHMN ACCELERATE DUE TO SURPRISE. WE ALSO VISITED THE BISHOP, THE BI-NATIONAL CENTER AND THE UNIVERSITY. NOTHING OUTSTANDING DEVELOPED FROM THESE LAST TWO VISITS EXCEPTING WE DID FLY THE FLAG. HOPEFULLY, THE IMPACT WAS POSITIVE.

7. OUR LAST STOP WAS THE CITY OF JUJUY, NEAR THE BOLIVIAN BORDER. NOT ONLY WAS THE WEATHER CHILLY BUT SO WERE THE PEOPLE WE MET. WE MADE USUAL ROUNDS OF PAYING OUR RESPECTS TO THE GOVERNOR, MAYOR, MILITARY COMMANDER, BISHOP, ETC. OUR VISITS WERE DEVOID OF ARGENTINE FRIENDLINESS. I WAS LATER TOLD THE BISHOP HAD BEEN CHOSEN TO BE THE SPOKESMAN FOR KEY PUBLIC OFFICIALS WE MET. IT WAS AN ACCURATE STATE-

MENT. WHEN WE CALLED ON THE BISHOP HE WAS PRIMED TO GIVE THE "COUP DE GRACE". HE PROCEEDED TO TELL US HOW LITTLE WE KNEW ABOUT LATIN AMERICA AND CERTAINLY HAD NO CONCEPT OF ARGENTINA'S PROBLEMS. HIS REFERENCES TO THE AMERICAN WAY OF LIFE WEREN'T VERY COMPLIMENTARY. IN A TACTFUL MANNER, I ATTEMPTED TO CLARIFY THE RECORD. I ALSO MADE AN EFFORT TO EXPLAIN THE OBJECTIVES OF US FOREIGN POLICY WITH PARTICULAR EMPHASIS ON OUR DESIRE TO CONTINUE OUR TRADITIONAL FRIENDLY RELATIONS WITH GOA. THIS SLOWED THE GOOD BISHOP SOMEWHAT. MY IMPRESSION WAS THE BISHOP REALIZED HE HAD BEEN OUT OF ORDER AND HE WAS SOMEWHAT CONCILIATORY AT THE END. COMMENT: THIS WAS MY FIRST OUTING IN ARGENTINA WHERE I COULD SENSE A FEELING OF BITTERNESS TOWARDS THE USG. I HAVE COVERED MOST OF ARGENTINA'S PROVINCES BY NOW AND THE WELCOMES
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HAVE ALWAYS BEEN MOST POSITIVE. IT BECAME ABUNDANTLY CLEAR THAT EXIM'S BANK REFUSAL TO APPROVE FINANCING FOR THE YACYRETA DAM PROJECT IN ARGENTINA HAS CAUSED A WAVE OF GENERAL NEGATIVE REACTION TOWARDS THE US.
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